

THE FLOOD AND THE ARK

The story of
THE PROPHET NUH

عليه السلام

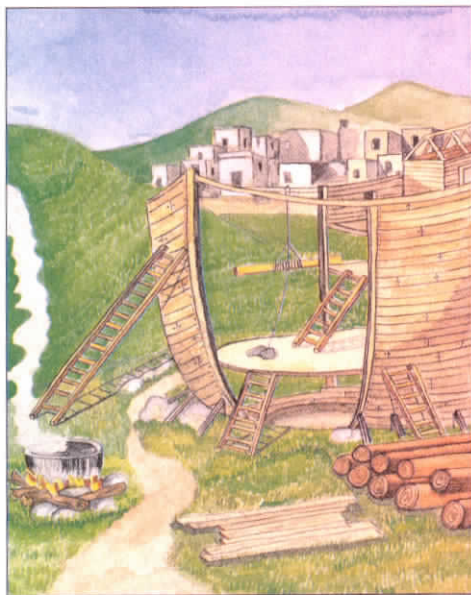


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The Flood and the Ark

The Story of Prophet Noah
(Peace be upon him)



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Foreword

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

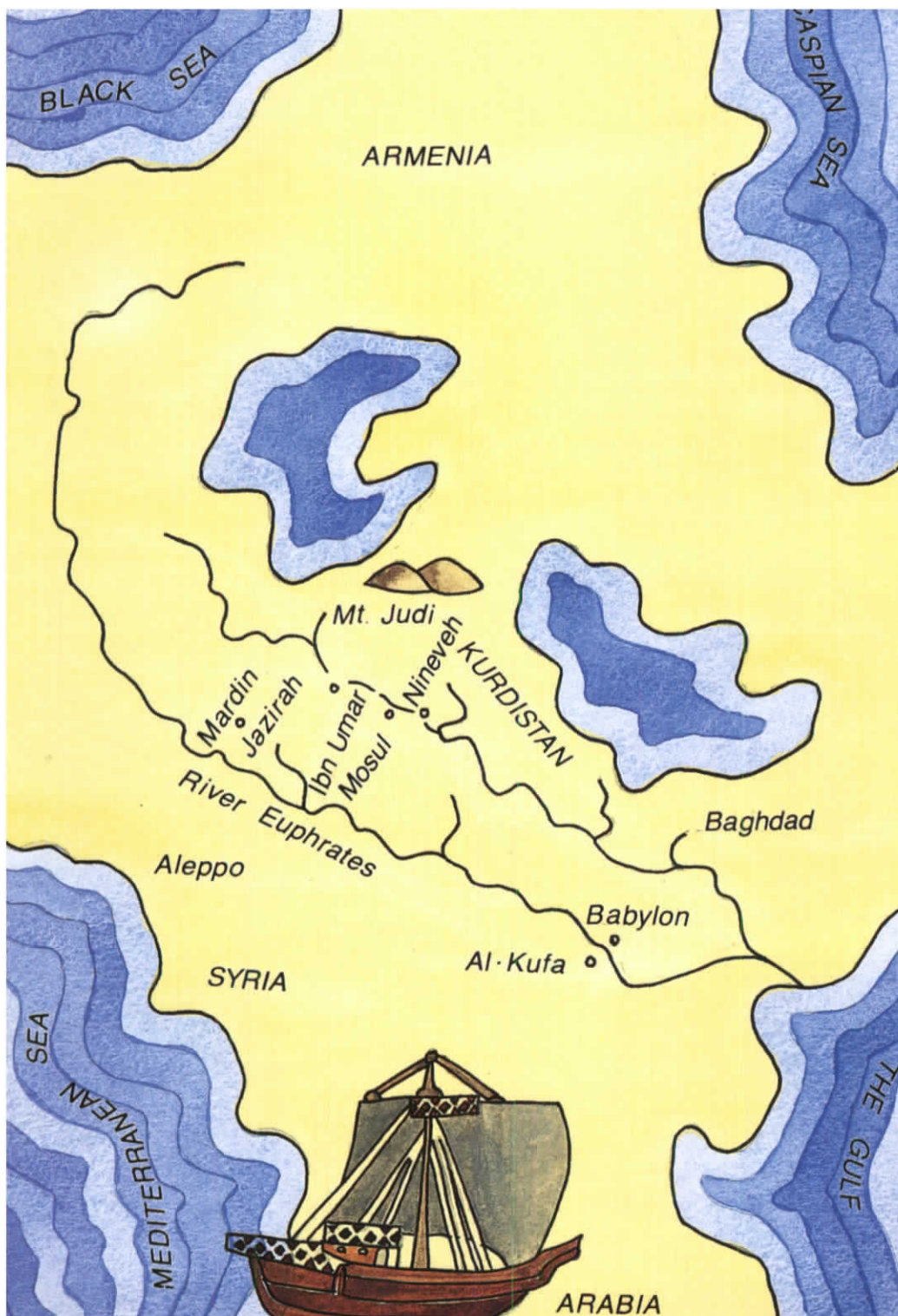
The Flood and the Ark is one of a series of stories on the lives of the great Prophets, upon whom be peace, intended for children of 8 to 12 years. From the moment God created the world He started to reveal His guidance for mankind through His Prophets. These books relate the Prophets' experiences as they struggled to persuade the erring peoples of their day to obey and worship the one and only God. Much that is of relevance today can be learnt from the way these men, specially chosen by God for their task, taught, guided and trained the miscreants.

The Flood and the Ark, in the English language, has been written for Muslim children growing up in an English-speaking country. This Prophet has been given the name he is known by, in English rather than his original Arabic name to avoid confusion. Parents and teachers, however, should ensure that the traditional Qur'anic name is also known.

Children living in a non-Muslim society are often denied their traditional Islamic family background where stories from the Holy Qur'an were frequently heard. Parents and teachers have a duty to make up for the shortcomings of living outside an Islamic environment. *The Flood and the Ark* is intended to help them in their task by strengthening children's awareness of the guidance provided by God's Prophets who all bore the same message for mankind: that there is no god but the One, True God.

My thanks are due to Bro. Jamil Qureshi, Sis. Maryam Davies, my daughter Shifa' and my other children for their help in producing this book. May God bless them all and accept this humble effort and make it beneficial to all.

Iqbal Ahmad Azami



1

The believers give thanks to God

God blessed the children of Adam (peace and blessings be upon him),* both men and women. He blessed their children, and the children after them. They grew in number and spread widely across the earth. They prayed only to God and thanked Him for His many favours to them.

They thanked Him for the air, because it was easy for them to breathe: it might not have been. They thanked Him for the firmness of the land against the sea, because it was safe for them to walk on: it might not have been. They thanked Him for the many colours and forms of earth and sky: it might have been a dark and empty waste. They thanked Him for the many things that were fit for them to eat and satisfied them: it might have been a dry, unfruitful world. They thanked Him for the bright, warm sun, and for the sweet, refreshing rain; because with sun and rain the grass became green, a delight to their sheep and goats, and a delight to themselves.

They learnt to use asses and horses and camels and so could travel easier and further in the land. And they

*Muslims are required to invoke Allah's blessings and peace upon the Prophets whenever their name is mentioned.



thanked God. They marvelled at the sweetness of fresh water, and how it was kept apart from the salty water of the sea. They learnt to travel on the water in boats and ships. And they thanked God. They learnt the benefit of certain grasses and began to sow and reap and harvest. They learnt to make bread for themselves. And they thanked God. They made many things out of stone and wood and metals and so life became better for them. And they thanked God even more.

They looked at the world around them. They saw that God had made many creatures in pairs, male and female, and blessed them in different ways. Some were stronger, some gentler, some smaller, some larger. Some ran on the ground, some flew in the air, some lived inside the earth, and some in the water. The plants and shrubs and trees were blessed in different ways also, and in different degrees: one tree would give more fruit one year than another, and the next year it would be different.

They looked at each other and marvelled how men and women are made. And they thanked God for His favours. Amongst themselves too they saw that some were stronger, some wiser, some taller. Some were cleverer with their hands, others cleverer with words. Yet they all belonged to one family, all were children of Adam. One year, one man's fields would yield better than his neighbour's, and his herds would be fatter and larger. The next year, perhaps the other way round. Yet they, and all living things in the land were

settled on one earth under one sky, all a part of one creation. All different in shape and form but, inside, all of one pattern, the work of the One God. Day and night they thanked Him, freely and with all their hearts and minds.

God was pleased with these men and women, and increased still more His favours to them. He had made the earth a wide and open space for them. In the same way, He made their hearts a wide and open space for each other, so there was love and mercy between them.

Though they worked more land to grow food, the earth seemed wider to them than before. They had more and more children, but what food they had, whether much or little, always seemed enough. If a man's fields yielded well, and somebody asked him, 'How has your harvest been?', the man would give an exact and true account. If a man's fields yielded poorly, and somebody asked him, 'How has your harvest been?', he too would give an exact and true account.

So the people trusted each other, hiding nothing. Whoever needed help from his neighbours asked for and got help. Whoever had help to give, offered and gave help. They were forgiving and kind to one another, and to all the animals that worked and grazed in their lands, and they walked softly on the earth, God's gift to them, and their hearts were at peace, both in the day and in the night.

2

The believers' enemy plots against them

But all the time an invisible enemy was plotting against the children of Adam. In the blackness of the darkest pit of hell, where hot fires burned hotter than we can imagine, and sizzled and spat tongues of flame that scorched to the bone but still gave no light, this enemy was always plotting. He is the enemy of man to this day. His name is Iblis or Satan.

Iblis went about among the children of Adam, trying to tempt them into turning against God. He would seek them out in dark shadows, in moments of tiredness, in moments of hunger or thirst, trying to find their weaknesses.

But whenever one of the believers made a mistake, his brothers or sisters would gently correct him, and he would straightaway ask forgiveness of them and of God. But Iblis did not stop, he did not give up. He said bitterly: 'Enjoy your happiness for a time! I see that when you make mistakes, God forgives you, and you forgive one another. But there is one sin that God does not forgive. It is that sin you will commit, children of Adam, and God will turn from you, and you will become my servants in hell!'

3

The great sin against God

The one sin that God will not forgive is if you pray not to Him but to some other god instead. Forgiveness is like wages or the payment you get when you work for someone. Suppose some people spend years working for someone. Then, at the end of that time, they go to a different person and say: 'Give us our wages.' That person will answer: 'But you didn't work for me. Go to the person you did work for.' In the same way, when their life is over people will come before God's angels, and say: 'Ask God to forgive us for all the mistakes we made.' God's angels will answer: 'But you did not pray to God. Go now and find those you did pray to.' But these other gods cannot be found because they do not exist. Only God is God.

Now Iblis wanted to destroy the souls of the children of Adam. He wanted the gates of heaven slammed in their faces, just as they had been slammed in his face when he turned from God. He wanted them to be his servants in hell. But how could he make them turn from God, when they were always praying to God and thanking Him? How could he make God's forgiveness impossible for them, when they were always asking God to forgive them, and when they were so quick to forgive each other? But Iblis was patient. He would take his time. He would try anything. His jealous heart kept him plotting.

4

The enemy succeeds

Iblis tried again and again to plant a seed of poison in the souls of the believers, a seed of doubt about the goodness of God. He thought it would be in times of great hardship that the believers would be weak, but it was not so. In hard times they prayed more seriously, they relied even more on God, and they were even kinder to each other. It was in the good times that they were weakest.

As life got better for the believers, now here, now there, one or other of them would listen to Satan's flattering chatter. He would whisper in the darkness: 'Do you know why you have more than your neighbours? Why, because you are cleverer, you work harder, you are so much better organized. They are forever coming to you, wanting this or that. How quick they are to tell you that everything really belongs to God! Have you noticed that the little they have does not belong to God quite so much as what you have? Have you noticed that?

'Help them? Of course you should help them. And of course you want to help them. They are your brothers and sisters. But think, is it really helping them to always give them what they ask? That man who called this morning. He says to you: "I haven't enough milk for

my family today." Straightaway, you answered him: "My dear brother, take some of ours, we have more than we need." Don't you realize that he hasn't enough milk because he doesn't take his goats as far as you do to find them the richest grass? Wouldn't you be helping him more if you let him work a bit harder, as you do? Besides, you do need the milk you worked so hard for, don't you? Does he deserve the extra that comes from your hard work, or does your family?"

In this way, little by little, hardness of heart set in. People began to have pride in having more than someone else. They clung to things and hid them from each other, not wanting to share. Little by little, they started to believe themselves independent of God. As they turned from God, so their lives seemed to become harder, they became more fearful, more discontented. Little by little, they started to believe there were dark powers who controlled all those things that they themselves could not control. Little by little, the earth that had felt so wide and friendly to them, began to seem unfriendly and narrow. There was never enough of this or enough of that, or there was too much when they did not need it.

5

The people build idols

Little by little, people forgot that they were children of one common father, part of one single creation, made for them to use and understand. They started to believe the rain had something against them if it did not come when they wanted it. Some of them pretended they knew how to please the rain and make it come. They invented weird sounds and dances and plays, and charged people for doing them. If the rain still did not come, they would say they had not been paid enough and charged more. And so it went on.

Weird sounds and dances and plays were invented to please the thunder and lightning; others to please the power that was supposed to control good harvests; others to stop their herds from being attacked by wild animals; others to protect them when they were travelling by river or sea; others to help them have children when they got married. Very soon there was almost nothing they dared do unless they first went through some weird song and dance.

After a time, they started to think of these powers as gods and built idols of them, and bowed down to them and asked them for favours. They had no idea what these gods looked like, so the idols they made were monsters, part animal and part man, or part

animal and part woman. How undignified they looked, bowing down before these monsters, things they had made with their own hands, things they had paid for with their own hard work. And these idols had no power at all, either to do good or to do harm.

After they built them, and after they prayed to them, and after they put offerings near them, they still felt no safer, they felt no calmer. Life just seemed harder and harder.



6

Temples and priests, wars and famines

Every big idol had to have its own temple. Even when they put the smaller idols together they had to make a temple for them too. It all took a lot of time and cost a lot of money. Every temple had to have temple-keepers to look after the building and keep it in good order. As they had so many idols to pray to, praying became very complicated. They needed experts to tell them what to say and how to say it. These prayer-teachers or priests wanted money before they would teach them anything. Then the temple-keepers said they must have money too for keeping the temples in order. The villagers had to find the money, and this made them very poor.

The priests and temple-keepers became very rich. They liked being rich and so they got together and made up special rules. One rule was that only priests were allowed to have horses and other work-animals. Ordinary people were not allowed to own them any more. So, if they needed them for work in the fields or for travelling on business, they had to pay the priests. Those who could not pay ended up selling their land. The only people rich enough to buy were the priests and temple-keepers. They became even richer, and the poor became even poorer.

The priests said to the poor who had no land: 'We will give you work. You can be soldiers and protect our temples. In exchange, we will give you food and a place to live.' The poor had no choice. They trained themselves to be fighters, and they invented weapons, and the priests and temple-keepers paid to have them made.

One day, the strongest of the soldiers said: 'We shouldn't be spending money building new idols. We will just go and take some from our neighbours' village.' So, together with some other soldiers, he went to the neighbours' village and stole their idols. When some of the villagers tried to stop them, they killed them.

The soldiers were very proud of themselves when they came home and put their new idols with the rest. They said: 'Now we'll be loved by the priests and the temple-keepers and they will give us money.' But the priests did not give them any money. This made the soldiers very angry. They turned on the priests, and killed some of them, and took all of their money. They decided they would not take orders from any priests ever again: 'We will choose a strong man to be our king.' In this way the strongest of the soldiers became the king.

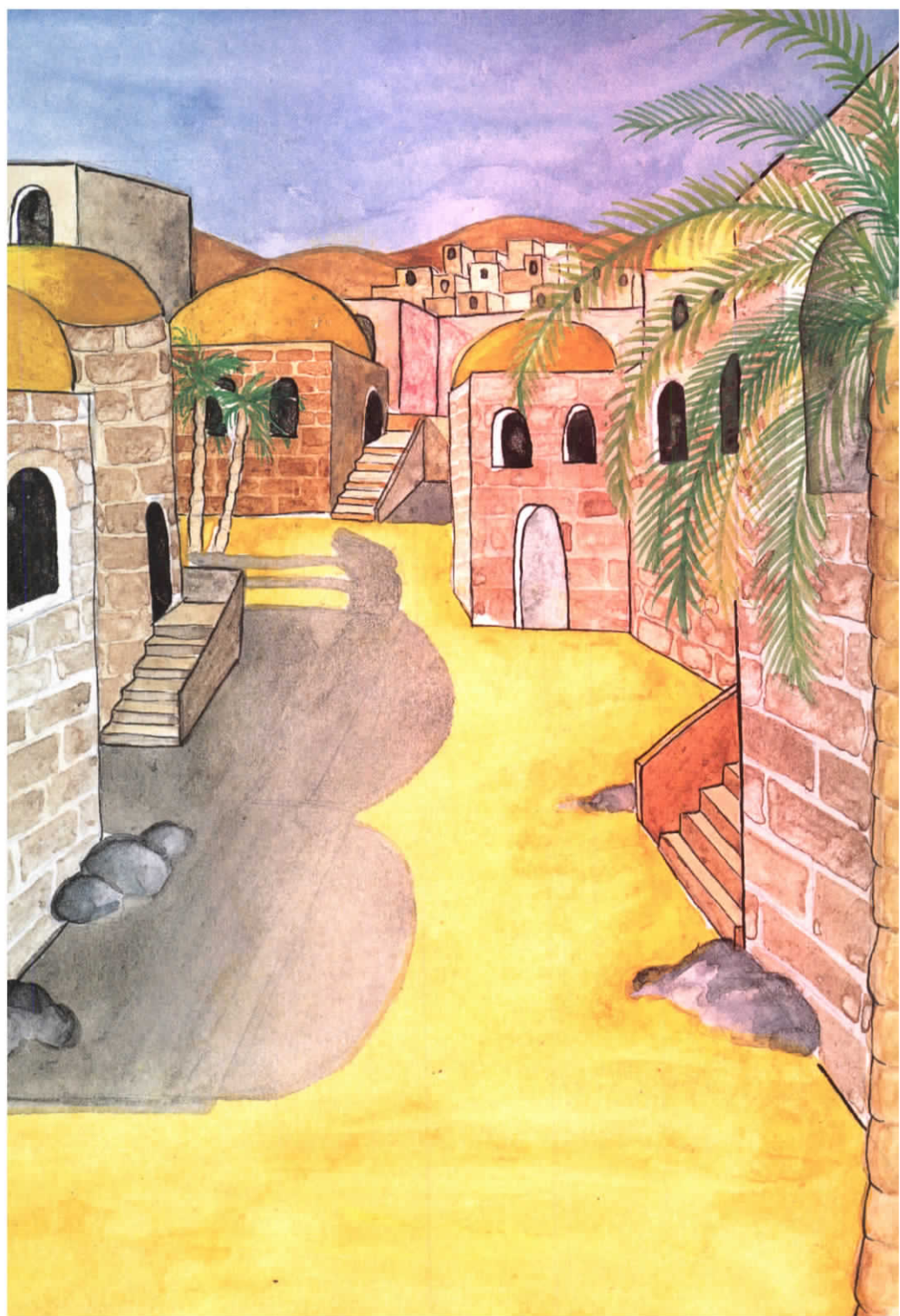
Straightaway, he ordered more people to become soldiers, and ordered more weapons to be made. Then, he trained his soldiers very hard and made them

into a strong army, with swords and spears and shields and bows and arrows, and fast horses. Then he raided all the villages nearby. He stole their idols and all their goods. He burnt their houses and took all their lands for himself. Then he separated the families of the people he had beaten in battle: the men became his soldiers or his building slaves, and the women and children were made slave-workers in the king's fields. This king had great plans.

He had a big city built with high walls to keep people out, and a big palace in the middle for himself. The king liked to be on a horse so he could look down on ordinary people as he passed them by. In fact, he did not like to be seen by them at all unless he was on his horse. So he ordered that his palace doors should be high enough for him to ride through on his horse. But his builders told him that it would look stupid unless the walls were very thick and tall as well, with big windows to match the doors. So that was how it was built, and when it was ready, the king stomped about inside feeling very proud of himself.

But it was not long before someone attacked him and beat him in battle and took his place as king. And so it went on, and brought wars and misery for mankind.

Alas for the children of Adam! They had given up the Oneness of God, and lost everything, the oneness of the earth, and their own oneness. Because they all prayed to different idols, they no longer thought of



themselves as brothers and sisters, children who had all come from the same first parents of mankind. They formed themselves into towns and cities, and the rich and powerful made themselves into nobles or kings. They set up councils to govern the common people and plan wars. The people suffered terribly.

The rich were never at ease being rich, they always wanted more. If the poor came to them for help, they would mock them and turn them away empty-handed. 'It's their own fault they are poor; if they were clever and organized like us, they would at least manage to feed themselves. They can't even do that. The world's better off without them!'

Others among the rich would say: 'We do feel sorry for the poor. But the trouble is we can't really give them our food or our clothes, because they just wouldn't know what to do with such fine stuff. They wouldn't really appreciate it. It's better to let them just muddle along as they are!'

Sometimes there were lots of spare food and drink in the towns and cities, but the people had forgotten how to share. The rich did not bother to visit those parts of the cities that were poor, and the poor were too hungry to fight for a share.

Because the poor were driven off their lands, they had to work poorer and poorer soil to grow the food they needed. The poorer ground soon became a waste, and so they moved on to even poorer soil. The rich

for their part were so greedy that they never gave their good soil a rest, like farmers had used to do. To pay for their wars, their palaces and their rich habits, they grew more and more, until the soil was quite worn out and became desert. In this way, little by little, the lovely earth which God had given to men and women as a place of beauty and comfort, became a hard, cruel place.

But God is merciful to His creation, even when they are ungrateful. God is patient, and gives His creation every chance to mend their ways. Because these children of Adam had forgotten about God, forgotten His favours to them, forgotten His patience with them, God sent them a reminder. He sent them good news of His forgiveness if they would mend their ways, and He sent them a warning of the punishment of a terrible day if they would not. God chose a good man from among the people themselves to carry His message to them. That man was the Prophet Noah (Nuh, peace and blessings be upon him).

7

God chooses Noah to guide his people

Only God knows who is able to carry His guidance to the people. People cannot decide for themselves. They do not know whose soul is strong and truthful enough to carry His message. Only God knows this, and so He chose Noah from among his people. Noah was a patient, gentle man with a clear head and a mighty heart, and always truthful. He was from among the common people and not one of the rich. But God gave him wisdom and authority. He told Noah what would happen to his people if they did not change their ways: 'Warn your people before a painful punishment comes to them.'

Noah stood up among his people and told them: 'I am a faithful messenger to you.' He told them they must stop praying to idols. He explained how foolish it was, expecting bits of stone to listen to their prayers. He told them to pray to God and trust in Him. He told them to give thanks to God, and to walk humbly and softly on the earth, and to be good to one another.

The people mocked: 'Since when have you become a messenger of God? We can guess what you are after. You want to be a leader and get power for yourself, and become rich! Away with you!'

Noah was patient with them. He said: 'I am here only to warn you. And I am here to bring you good news: serve God and God alone. I fear for you the punishment of a terrible day.' He said to them: 'In exchange for this, I am not asking you for your money. My wages will come from God, and only from God.'

The people did not want to listen. Those who were better-off had soft, fat stomachs, but their hearts were hard and empty. They did not want to share what they had, they wanted even more. They did not want to care properly for the needy or the orphans who lived near them but remained poor and hungry. They preferred to go on passing them by. They did not want to care for the animals that worked for them in their lands, or for the land that provided them with so much. They just wanted to get out of it as much as they could, as fast as they could. Is not that the way it had been among them for so long? So they carried on with their hard hearts full of worries and fears about the things of this world. They carried on praying to their idols. They were afraid to stop in case, when things changed, they lost their riches.

Among the poor too, most of the people did not want to listen to the message Noah brought. Their stomachs were thin and empty, but their hearts were nearly as hard as those of the well-off. They did not dream of a better world where people were like brothers and sisters to one another. They did not dream of a world where people looked after the earth and the animals

of the earth so well that even after hundreds of years, the earth would be a fine place to live in. No. What they dreamed about was being like the rich people were now. They dreamed of having many horses and big houses, and servants to do all their work for them.

8

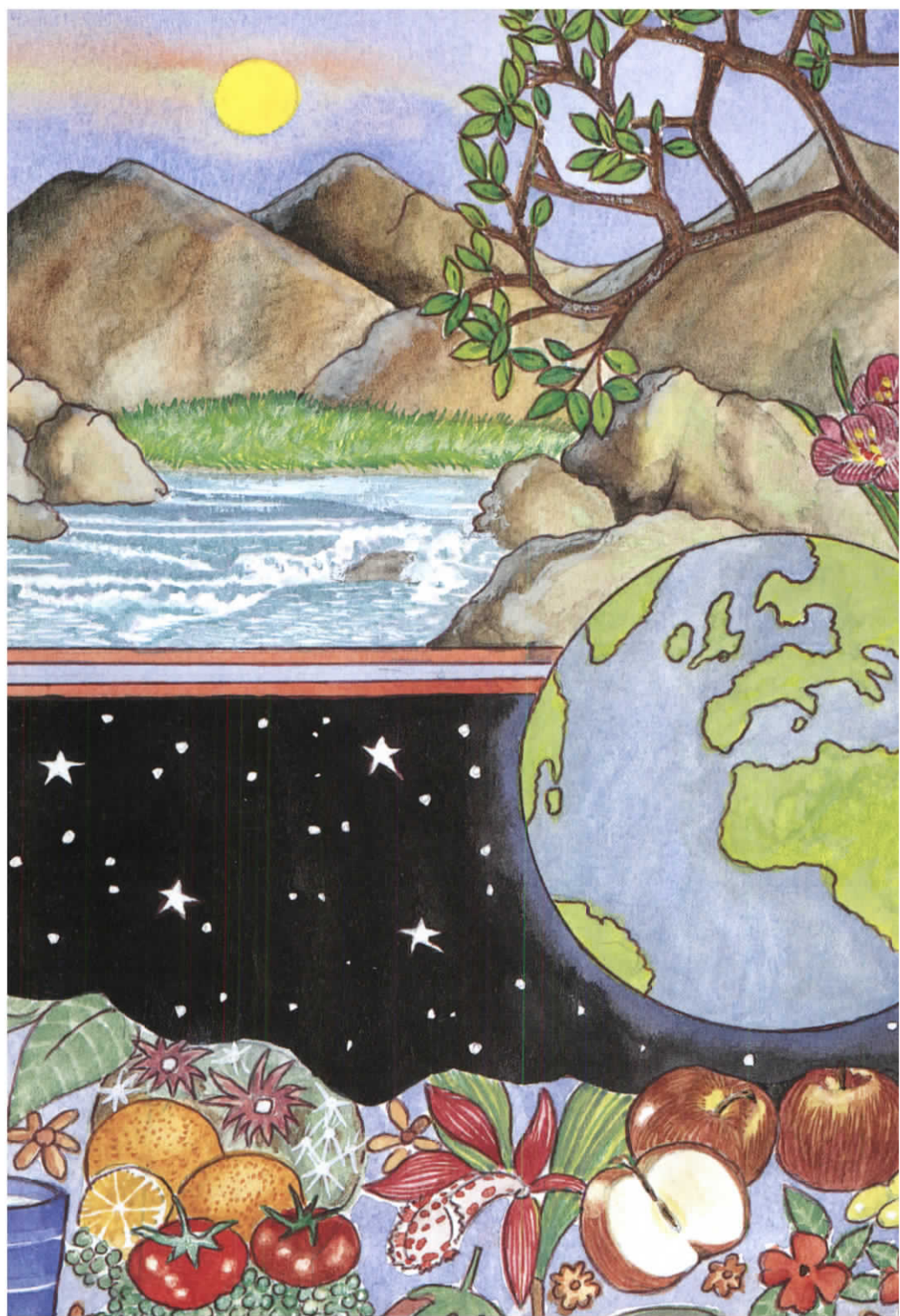
The people ask for an angel

Neither the rich nor the poor people believed that a man could be so good as Noah. They did not believe that a message could be so simple and so good as Noah's message from God. They did not believe that it could be so easy to pray.

Noah said God had made the heavens and the earth, sun and stars and moon, and rivers and seas and mountains, everything, for the benefit of mankind, and what He asked in return was only that men and women pray to Him and be good to one another.

The people thought: It can't be! All the priests and temple-keepers were always telling them to do complicated things and make many offerings, and pay lots of money. No. It can't be! They had never heard of a man giving good advice for nothing. They could not remember any such thing. None of them had heard their fathers or mothers telling them about any such thing.

The people saw that Noah was a man like themselves, who lived and worked and ate and slept, and who had a family to support, just like themselves. They thought: We couldn't even imagine a message as pure



and simple as the message Noah says he has brought from God, let alone stand up before others and say it. No, it's all a bit beyond us. He's too good to be true. Now if it was an angel with such a message, we might believe.

They thought in this way because their souls were not strong enough to fight for the truth. In fact, they were looking for an excuse not to believe. They said: 'If God had willed, He would have sent angels with the message. We have never heard of the like of this among our parents and grandparents.'

But if God had sent an angel, they still would not have believed. They would have made some other excuse. They would have said to the angel: 'It is easy for you to say "Be good, and believe in God", you are an angel; you don't have the problems we have.'



9

Noah preaches to the councillors

Despite all that the people said to him, despite all their mocking, Noah was patient and true to God. He continued to speak up for the truth. He spoke up against praying to idols, warning of the terrible punishment to come for those who went on doing it. After many years, a small number of people from among the very poorest in the land began to believe in the message Noah brought and to pray to the One God.

The spies of the king's council heard of this and told the councillors. Then Noah, together with some of those who believed, were brought before the councillors' court. These were super-rich nobles, sure of themselves, sure they knew everything there was to know, sure that they would soon put a stop to Noah's preaching. Noah spoke to them as he spoke to all the people. His voice did not change, and his message did not change, just because these were rich nobles. God's message is the same for all.

The councillors listened to Noah and then said: 'We see that you are just an ordinary person who is living now and will one day die, like ourselves. As for your message, we see that only the lowest of the low pay attention to it and follow you. They are blind and

unthinking. We do not see that you are better or higher than us in any way. Rather the opposite. We think you are a liar.'

God gave Noah patience. He answered: 'O my people, God has given me mercy from Himself. I am here speaking to you with the authority of a clear sign from my Lord. But if all this has been made dark to you, if you cannot understand it, how should we force you to it? How can you be forced to understand what you do not want to understand?' Then Noah reminded them again: 'O my people, I am not asking you for any of your riches. My wages will come only from God.'

The councillors talked amongst themselves. This Noah was not attacking them. He was not trying to stir the people up against them, or anything like that. Noah had made it clear that they were free to believe in the message from God or not believe. Even so, they wanted to show Noah in a bad light in front of the believers. They thought: If we were in Noah's place, we would not want to stay among the poor. Rather, we would want to be rich nobles. Who could want to take sides with the poor? Of course, they only thought like this because they were hard-hearted men. They asked Noah to drive away the poor who followed him.

But Noah had no wish to join with the nobles. He had no wish to be one of the rich. He said to the councillors: 'I will not drive away those who believe: those who believe will surely meet their Lord.'

The councillors did not understand at all. They thought: Noah is afraid that the poor who believe in his message will turn against him and harm him if he drives them away. So they explained to Noah that if he did as they wanted, they would protect him. How foolish these councillors were!

Noah felt sorry for them. He said: 'Ah, but I see you are people who don't know.' The councillors still looked blank. So Noah explained to them that the believers would meet God; when they met God, they would tell God that Noah had driven them away. Then God would question Noah about it, and who would protect Noah then? Noah then said to both the poor who were his followers and to the councillors: 'O my people, who would help me against God, if I drive you away?'

Noah felt sorry for his people. Most of them could not understand. They were used to men who pretended they had secret messages from this spirit or that spirit, men who wanted to set up a new idol and make money out of it. They were used to men who pretended to have special powers, and who promised to make their followers rich and powerful. They were used to men who tried to turn one part of the people against the other part. Such men, when they spoke to one group, would say: 'Follow us, join us, and all your enemies will be destroyed!' But if that group did not join them, they would go to the other group and say: 'Follow us, join us, and all your enemies will be destroyed!'

Noah was not like such men. He was a true servant of God. He wanted to make peace between people, to teach them to trust in God and to be good to one another and to share things fairly.

Noah had told them this many times. But he was a patient man and did not mind telling them again. He said:

‘Will you not remember? I do not say to you: “I own the treasures of God, I can make you masters over others”. The Unseen is to me unknown; I do not pretend to know it. And I do not say to you: “I am an angel”. And the people you are against, the ones you hate, I do not say about them that God will not give them any good. Only God knows, and God knows best, what they have in their hearts. If I did say such things to you, I myself would be doing wrong.’

Then Noah explained to them again that he had come to give good news to those who would believe in God and do good deeds, and to warn those who went on praying to idols and doing wrong. He said: ‘O my people! Pray to God! You have no god but Him. There is no god but God. Truly I am afraid for you. I fear for you the punishment of a terrible day.’

The councillors and nobles were no wiser than most of the common people. Like them, they were used to praying to pieces of stone. Their hearts had become like pieces of stone. They looked at Noah and saw the deep sorrow in his face. They saw that he wanted

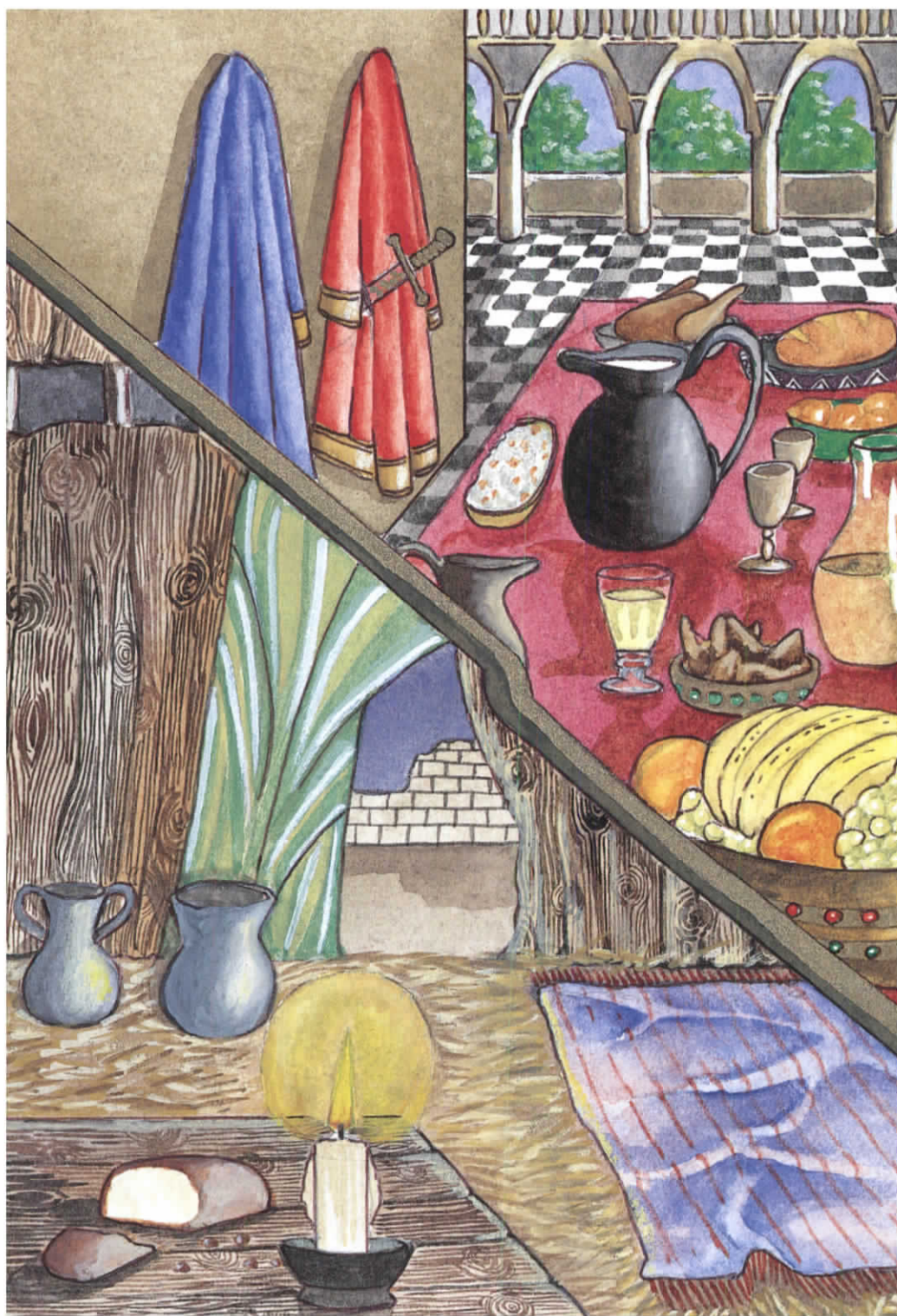
nothing for himself. They saw that he wanted the best for all of them, and yet asked for nothing in return. But his goodness did not touch their hearts. His sorrow did not move them. They called him a simpleton, and other names, because he denied their gods. They said to Noah, very threateningly: 'We see that you are seriously in the wrong. Take care, or you will be cursed and stoned.'

Noah answered straightaway: 'My people, there is no wrong in what I am saying. No. I am a messenger from the Lord of this creation, the Lord of all creations. I am delivering to you the messages of my Lord. The advice I am giving you is good advice, because I know from God what you do not know.' And it was true that Noah did know. He knew from God of the terrible punishment for wrong-doers on the Day of Judgement, and he was afraid for his people.

The councillors whispered amongst themselves, plotting. Then they turned to the small group of believers and said to them: 'Think carefully before you answer. When the caravans bring to our city the finest clothes and the finest furniture in the world, who is first to see them? You or us? Who is first to use them? You or us? When the harvest is gathered, who is first to taste the best of the fruits of the earth? You or us? Who lives in the best houses? You or us?'

The believers were silent.

The councillors went on: 'Of course you know the answer. It is we who are first in the land to see and



taste and use the very best of everything. Don't you foolish people realize that if there was any good in this praying to God that Noah talks about, we would be the first to know about it?'

The believers remained silent. But they moved closer to Noah, to show that they stood by him and believed in him. The councillors noted this and their faces showed their anger. Then they started whispering again, plotting what to say next.

10

The councillors call for the punishment to come

After a while the councillors' leader spoke to Noah. His voice was mocking and nasty: 'You go against us, Noah, in what we say. You go against us in the gods we pray to. You go against us in the way we live. If we don't change ourselves, you promise us a terrible punishment from God. Well now, if you are a truthful man, Noah, bring us what you promise, bring us this punishment!' Before Noah could answer, the leader of the councillors nodded to his soldiers and they took their swords out ready.

Noah was not afraid. He feared only God. He spoke in the same steady voice that he always spoke in. He said to the councillors: 'God will bring you His punishment, if He wills, and when; you cannot prevent it. If I give you my honest advice, but God wills to turn you away, my honest advice will not help to save you. Don't you understand? God is your Lord, and you will be returned to Him.'

The councillors' leader smiled. Then he chuckled. Then he laughed out loud, a long, mocking laugh. The others joined in, mocking at Noah and the few believers. When the laughing died down, the councillors said: 'This man is crazy. But he is harmless. Get

him and his people out of here. We have nothing to worry about from them. The punishment may come or it may not, ha! ha!’ Then, still mocking, the soldiers pushed Noah and the believers out of the councillors’ court. How foolish they were to mock Noah, for in doing that they were mocking God.

11

Noah is patient: the people do not listen

For many years, Noah travelled about the land and preached the message of God.

Peace be upon Noah for the might of his patience, because he put up so long with the people who mocked him.

Peace be upon Noah for the might of his heart, because he cared for his people even when they laughed in his face.

Peace be upon Noah for the might of his soul, because his trust in God was perfect.

Peace be upon Noah who preached by day and by night.

Peace be upon Noah who called to his people in private and in public, singly and in gatherings.

Peace be upon Noah for the truth of his message from God.

As for the people of Noah, alas! When Noah said to them: 'Serve God and fear Him, and follow me. And God will forgive you your sins, and He will let you be until a certain date. And when the date God has set

comes, it cannot be changed. Oh, if you only knew . . . ', the people put their fingers in their ears and refused to listen.

Alas for the people of Noah! When Noah said to them: 'Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Surely He is always All-forgiving. And He will open up the skies for you with plenty of rain; He will help you to do well and grant you children, and gardens and rivers . . . ', the people did not pray to be forgiven. Instead they threw their cloaks around themselves, and covered themselves up in their own pride.

Alas for the people of Noah! When Noah said to them: 'What is it with you? Don't you see the glory of God? He created you little by little, stage by stage. Don't you see how God made the many heavens one beyond the other? And set the moon there as a light in the night-time, and the sun as a lamp in the day-time? Don't you see how God created you out of this earth, then He will return you into it, and again bring you out? Don't you see where God has spread the earth for you like a carpet, and made valleys in it, ravines, so you can know your way? . . . ', the people rebelled against the truth, even though it was present before their eyes and ears and minds. Instead they turned to those who were rich in the land and listened to them.

As for those who were rich in the land, they were wrong themselves and dragged others down with them. They said: 'Do not turn away from your gods:

Wadd, Suwa', Yaghuth, Ya'uq and Nasr . . . ' Alas for them, because they prayed to these gods which do not exist!

For many years Noah struggled against the idol-worshippers. But only his family, or most of them, believed, and a few, very few, others. Noah was full of sadness for his people. He prayed to God: 'O my Lord, help me, because my people mock at me and call my message lies.'

God said to him: 'Noah, none of your people will believe except those who have already believed. So do not be upset on account of what they are doing.'

12

Noah is ashamed for his people, because they will not believe

Before God, when he prayed to Him, Noah was ashamed for his people. So when God said to Noah that his people would not believe, he knew that God had set a date for them, and that date had come. Now it was too late.

Noah prayed: 'My Lord, do not leave the unbelievers on the earth, not even one of them. If You leave them, they will only drag Your believing servants into doing wrong. If You leave them, all their children will be like them, hell-bent unbelievers.'

Then Noah prayed a second prayer: 'My Lord, forgive me and forgive my parents, and anyone who comes into my house as a believer, and forgive the believing women as well as the believing men. As for the unbelievers, let them not grow, O Lord, except in their own ruin.'

13

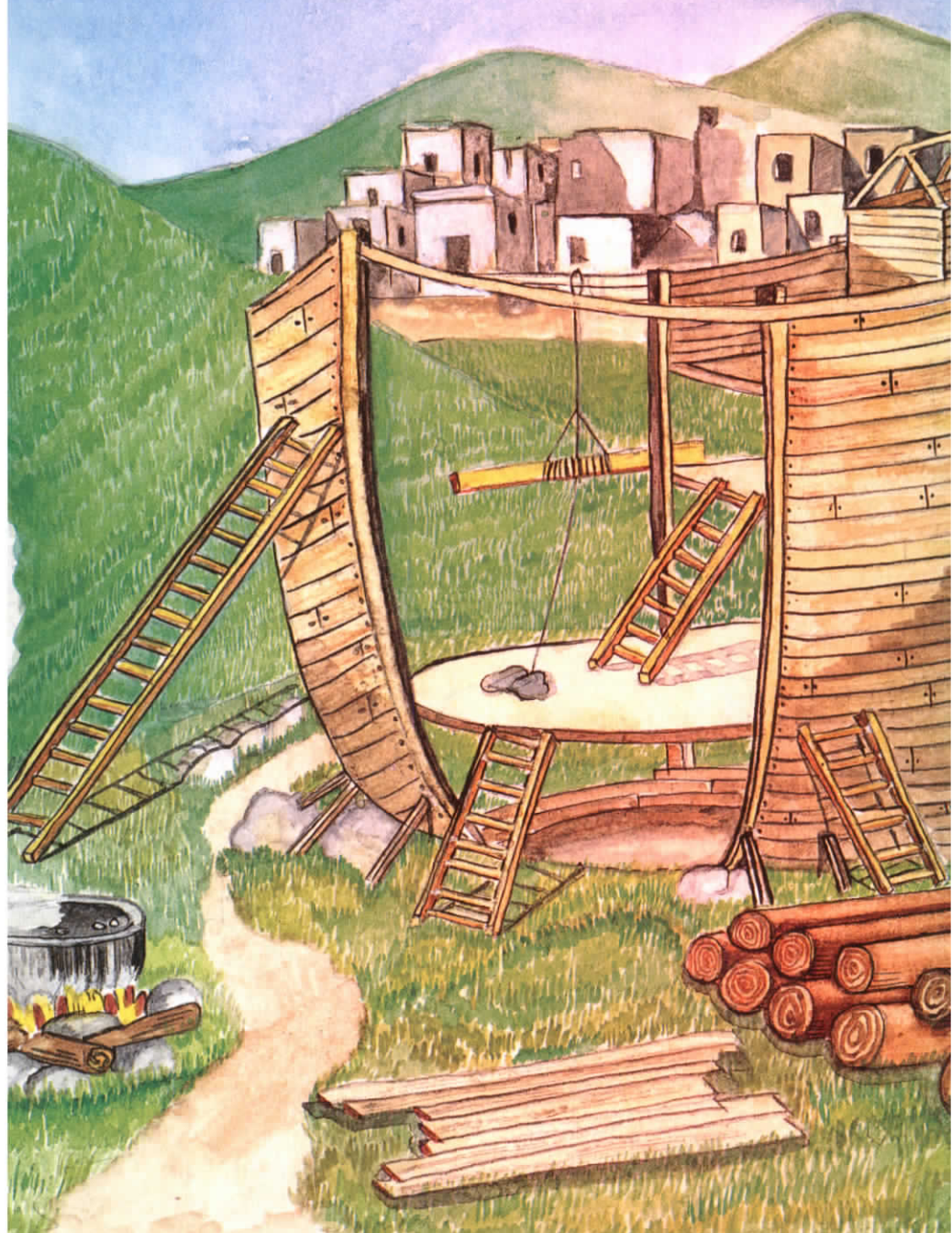
God commands Noah to build the Ark

God answered Noah's prayer. Noah had prayed for the matter to be settled between him and the unbelievers who called his message lies. And the matter was settled as God willed. God commanded Noah to build an Ark. God told Noah that He would watch over the building of the Ark, and would show Noah how it was to be done.

Noah and the believers worked with all their hearts and minds at their task. Peace be upon Noah and the believers for the strength of their labours, and the strength of their trust in God.

They were building this huge ship at the edge of the city, many miles from the nearest sea. The unbelievers came to sightsee. Even the councillors came, and thought it was a great joke.

One day the leader of the council himself came, riding his tall horse, dressed in fine and splendid robes. When he saw the Ark, now nearly finished, he mocked: 'Well, well, well. What a clever man you are, Noah! And how will this great vessel get to the sea. Will it fly, Noah? Or, perhaps you will put it on your back and trot to the sea?' Then he burst out laughing.



Noah looked up from his work and his voice was gentle and sad: 'Oh, you are mocking us now. But just as you are doing that now, it is certain that we will be in a position to mock at you.' Noah looked up into the proud face of the man sitting so very sure of himself on his tall horse, and he said: 'And you will find out who will get a punishment bringing him down and down, and after that you will find out who gets a punishment that lasts and lasts.' The councillor was not moved. He threw the gold-embroidered hood of his robe over his head and rode off, making a lot of dust and disturbance. The believers went on with their work on the Ark.

God knew the gentleness of Noah's heart, his caring for his people. So He said to Noah: 'Do not speak to Me of those who have done evil. They will be drowned.'

14

The hour of the Flood comes near

The time came near. The earth and air and water and fire, the elements of the creation, answered the command of their Lord. The ground seemed to hum and tremble, the mountains wavered in the heat, the waters of the seas and rivers did not stir, there was not a breath of wind, the air choked. The skies were solid with heavy, dark clouds. Just as if it were a great oven, the creation boiled. Who now would mend his ways, and ask God's forgiveness? Who now, as the clouds piled up, thicker and thicker in the darkening skies, would turn to God? Day by day, the air became heavier and heavier. How hard it was to breathe! Who prayed to God, now? Who prayed for mercy?

Noah prayed and the believers prayed with him, and God said: 'Settle in the Ark, two of every kind, and your family, except one: against that one Our Word has been spoken. And settle in the Ark anyone else who will believe.' When God has set a date, it cannot be put back. When God's Word has been spoken, it cannot be said another way. And God saw how few were those who believed, even then, how few they were!

The time came nearer. Noah and the believers settled in the Ark two of every kind of living thing. The Ark

was as God had planned it should be. Here in one place were the seeds of all living things, and all living creatures, two of every kind, a male and a female, and believing men and believing women, all of one pattern, God's pattern which He made to make known His Mercy. Peace be upon Noah for the building of the Ark! In the Ark were many rooms, safe and secure quarters, for the different kinds that were settled in it, waiting. The planks of the Ark were solid and sound, on all the decks and on all sides, and in all the roof-timbers, and the Ark itself was waiting. God had watched over the building of the Ark, and He watched over its loading.

The time came still nearer. When Noah and the believers were settled in the Ark, and all the kinds had been accounted for, and when all was still, he said these prayers. God taught Noah the words: 'Praise and thanks be to God, who has saved us from the wrong-doers . . . O my Lord, lead me to land in a blessed landing-place, for You are the best of those who lead to safe-landing.' And when this prayer was finished, the time ran out for the unbelievers.

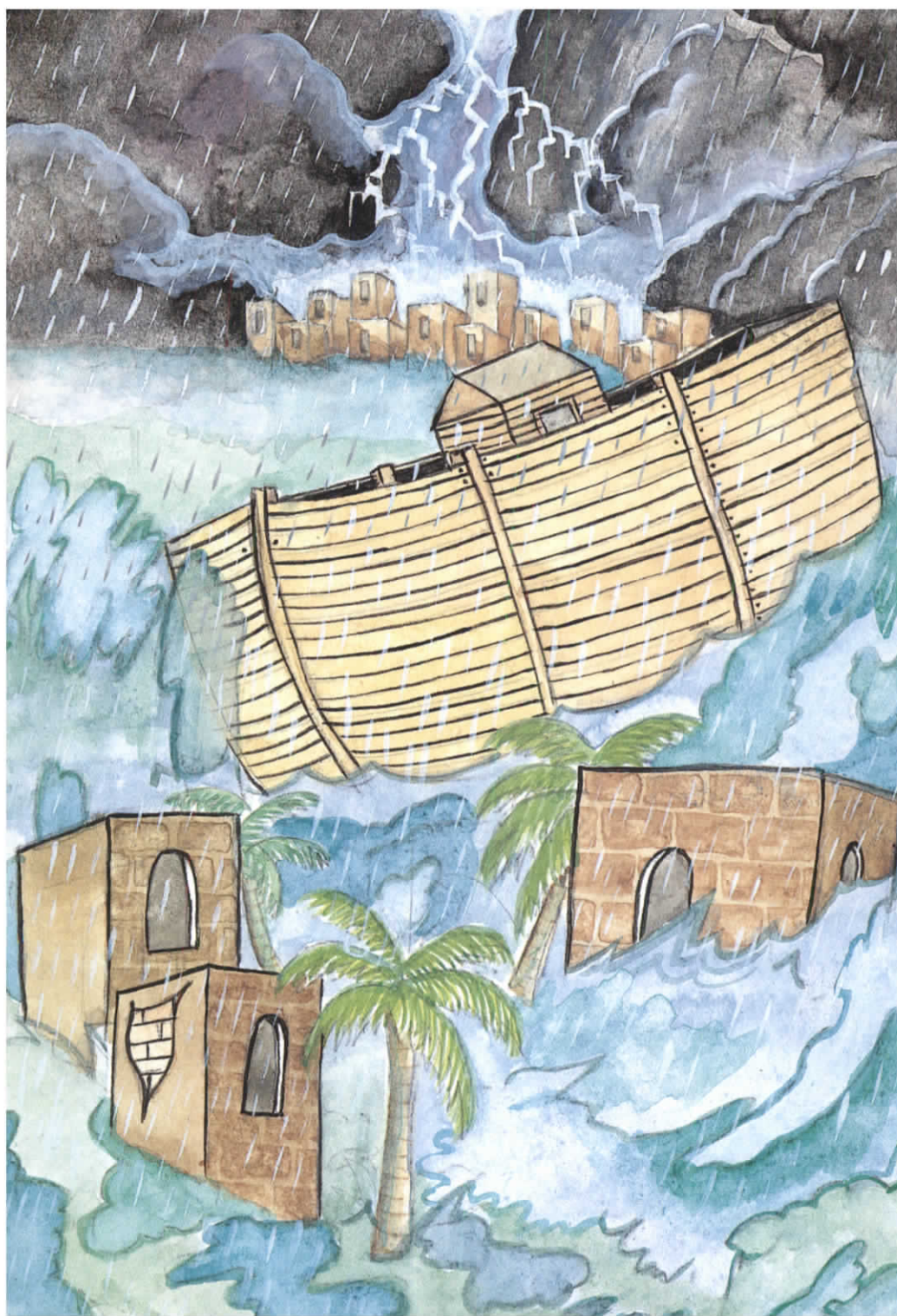
15

The Flood comes and the unbelievers are drowned

Thunder roared to mark that moment, as if a mountain of metal had crashed into another: *Clash! Clash!* The people put their fingers in their ears: too late! too late! The lightning flashed to mark the moment, as if sun and moon had smashed into each other: *Clash! Clash!* The people covered their eyes: too late! too late! Then, the skies opened wide, and everywhere was *Rain! Rain! Rain!* Down it poured, pillars and walls of water. The people covered their heads, and they rushed into their houses, and under trees: too late! too late! There was no shelter that day in houses, for the houses gave way; there was no shelter that day under trees, for the trees gave way.

Under the sea the sea-bed split open and the waters rushed up, and swelled the tides, and the waves crashing over the land mixed with the rain, and the shores moved in. The rain swelled the rivers which flowed wider and faster, and burst their banks, and their waters poured into the cities. And still it rained and rained, as if there would be no end.

The waters struck the sides of the Ark, and the Ark stirred, but its sides held fast. Inside, the animals shifted in their stalls; and the believers heard the thunder and



rain and cried: 'God have mercy on us!', and they too held fast. The Ark began to rise. Noah looked out and saw one of his sons who was an unbeliever running toward the mountains. He called out to him: 'O come and sail with us. O my son, do not be with the unbelievers!' Peace be upon Noah for the gentleness of his heart, even now amid the thunder and lightning and rain.

But Noah's son would not believe. He was sure the waters would never reach the mountain tops. He said: 'I will hide myself in the mountain, that will shelter me from the water.' Noah stretched out his hand to his son, and he said: 'This day, there is no shelter from God's command, not for anyone unless God has mercy on them.' But his son did not reach out to Noah, waves of water came between father and son, and the unbeliever drowned. The Ark rose up on the waters, and moved away.

The flood drowned the unbelievers. Their high-walled cities crumbled. Their towers did not save them; their idols did not save them: the waters washed them all away. The proud councillors who had mocked so loud, who had called upon Noah to bring the punishment upon them, they were not mocking now, they too were washed away.

Down came their tall doorways made to ride in on horseback, and along with their hordes of treasures, kept from the poor, the waters washed them all away.

The waters crashed, this way and that. The high council table, their spears and swords, and their shields and chariots, their bows and their arrows: all were washed away.

There, swirling along, went their heavy thrones, and their fine, embroidered robes, their ladies' pretty hat-pins, their silks and their brooches, and their gold and silver platters, and the silver bells for their horses and camels, and the jewelled collars for their cats, and all their beds and soft cushions, and their gardens whose doors were closed to the poor. Carried away on the flood went their stores of grains and fruits which had never been used to feed the hungry. All were carried away on the raging flood, to be buried among the rubble and mud.

16

Noah appeals for his son

Thus the matter was settled between Noah and all those who called his message lies. Though the waves were as high as mountains, the Ark ran through them, safe and secure.

Then Noah called to God. God had promised to save Noah and his family. Noah said: 'O my Lord, my son is of my family, and Your promise is true. You are the most fair of those who give judgement.' But God said to Noah: 'Noah, he is not of your family. Do not ask Me for something you know nothing about. I warn you, in case you should become one of those who are ignorant.'

Only God knows what is deep in a person's soul. That is why only God is the most fair of those who give judgement. A person who is, deep in his soul, an unbeliever, cannot be counted part of the family of God's messenger. Peace be upon Noah for the calm of his soul, because he accepted God's judgement. He said: 'My Lord, I pray for You to shelter me, in case I should ask from You something about which I know nothing. And if You do not forgive me, and if You do not have mercy on me, I am one of the lost.'

17

The Flood is over: the children of Noah remember the Ark

God commanded the rain to stop, and it stopped. He commanded the earth to swallow up the waters, and, all around, the waters sank away. The Ark settled on Al-Judi, and God spoke to Noah and said: 'Noah, come down into a peace that is from Us. And blessings upon you and the peoples of those who are with you.'

The earth was now fresh and clean and silent. Noah and the believers came down from the Ark, and they released all the animals that were with them in the Ark. After the flood, the earth was richer and more fertile, as God had willed, and the seeds they planted grew quickly and spread. Others were spread by the winds, as God willed, still others had lain in the earth waiting for the waters to sink away. So the earth was soon green and beautiful again. And the animals who fed on the green plants, and, in their turn, the animals who fed on them, grew in number, and so the earth was stocked once again with all sorts of living things.

God blessed Noah and the children of Noah. They grew in number and spread widely on the earth. Because they remembered what their people had



learned before, it was easier for them than for their forefathers. For a time they were true believers in the One God, and they gave thanks to Him for saving them from the flood, and for making their lives a comfort. For a time there was mercy and kindness in their hearts for each other, and for all the living things of the earth. For a time they remembered the Ark where much of God's creation, created for man's sake, was collected together, all creatures different, but, inside, all of one pattern. And for a time, they all remembered Noah, and prayed:

Peace be upon Noah among all men!

Peace be upon Noah among all men!